



## CHAPTER 9 GUIDELINES FOR AWNINGS AND CANOPIES



Awnings can contribute to the overall image of commercial areas of the historic districts by providing visual continuity to a commercial block, helping to highlight specific buildings, or by covering any unattractively remodeled transom areas above storefronts.



A fixed canopy supported by carved wooden brackets and wired to the wall above protects this Waterford storefront.

## A. INTRODUCTION

Awnings can contribute to the overall image of commercial areas of the historic districts by providing visual continuity to a commercial block, helping to highlight specific buildings, or by covering any unattractively remodeled transom areas above storefronts.

Some commercial buildings in the districts may have lost their sloped wooden canopies and porches. Awnings may be an effective way of recalling these missing elements and denoting the commercial use of the building.

Awnings also protect pedestrians from the weather, shield window displays from sunlight, and conserve energy. Awnings offer the business owner additional facade visibility because of their color and the possibility of adding an awning sign (see *Chapter 8: Guidelines for Signs*).

### ■ INAPPROPRIATE TREATMENTS

1. Aluminum or plastic awnings are inappropriate for any building within the historic districts.
2. Avoid the use of metal or plastic awnings, or awnings fashioned of shiny, plastic-like fabrics.
3. Do not use overly bright or complex patterns for awnings.

### Preservation Brief #44:

#### The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings

[www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief44.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief44.htm)

## B. TYPES

### ■ GUIDELINES

1. *Standard sloped fabric awnings* are the most traditional awning type and are appropriate for most historic commercial buildings. They are available either fixed in place or with mechanisms that allow them to retract a historic feature.
2. *Residential shed awnings* based on historic designs may be appropriate for windows of residential buildings in the historic districts. understated traditional designs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
3. *Boxed or curved fabric awnings* are a more current design treatment. Use these designs only on non-historic or new commercial buildings.
4. *Canopies* are fixed wooden or metal architectural elements that cover an entry or storefront. Their use may be appropriate on some commercial buildings. These designs must fit the storefront design and not obscure important elements such as transoms or decorative glass.
  - a. Historic canopies should be retained and maintained on historic building facades.







*Originally, many awnings were retractable, as is this example in Lincoln.*



*Residential shed awnings fit within the window trim and are useful to block sunlight.*

## C. DESIGN AND PLACEMENT

### ■ GUIDELINES

1. Choose awning designs that do not interfere with existing signs or distinctive architectural features of the building.
2. Place awnings where they will not conflict with street trees, street signs or other elements along the street.
3. Fit awnings to the width and shape of any storefront or window openings that it covers. Straight-sloped awnings work best on rectangular storefronts.
4. Make sure that the bottom of the awning valance is at least seven (7) feet above the sidewalk.



*The sloped awning illustrated here is the most historic profile and is appropriate for use in the historic districts.*

## D. MATERIALS AND COLOR

### ■ GUIDELINES

1. Fabric is the traditional material for awnings and should be used in the historic districts.
2. Canopies and marquees were often constructed of wood or metal. Look to historic precedents for the design of similar new features.
3. Coordinate awning colors with the overall building color scheme.

### SIGN PLACEMENT ON AWNING



*The valance is the front panel of an awning on which a sign may be applied.*